

Top Secret 184

(Security Classification)

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Tuesday May 18, 1976

CI NIDC 76-117C

State Department review completed



NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION

Unauthorized Disclosure Subject to Criminal Sanctions

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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Tuesday May 18, 1976.

[REDACTED] The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

LEBANON

[REDACTED] The severity of the fighting in Beirut over the weekend prompted President Franjiyah to threaten yesterday not to resign until security improves. It is not clear whether he was acting on his own or in keeping with an alleged secret agreement between Christian and Syrian leaders that Franjiyah will stay on until Syria eliminates the security threat from radical Muslims.

[REDACTED] The Christians themselves appear to have initiated a new offensive against the leftists in Beirut. The US embassy has learned that Christian forces attacked the Muslim neighborhood of Naba on Sunday, setting off the worst round of fighting in the capital in months.

[REDACTED] Both Christian and Muslim militiamen used heavy artillery to shell residential areas; death tolls were especially high in the Christian sections of Ashrafiyah and Ayn Rummanah and in the Palestinian refugee camp at Sabra. Although the bombardment subsided somewhat yesterday, fighting continues in most areas of the capital.

[REDACTED] Tripoli remained relatively quiet yesterday, but tension persists

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[] Arafat returned to Beirut yesterday after conferring over the weekend with President Asad. Arafat made no statement on the brief visit, suggesting that the talks did not go well.

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[] Libyan Prime Minister Jallud unexpectedly arrived in Damascus during Arafat's meeting with Asad, which may have added to tensions between the two leaders. Libya gives aid to several of the radical groups that Syria has recently attacked, and Jallud may have argued more vehemently than Arafat for an end to Syria's campaign against the Lebanese left. []

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NIGERIA

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[] General Obasanjo, Nigeria's head of state, announced on Saturday that the leader of the unsuccessful coup attempt last February was executed earlier in the day along with at least one other high-ranking former army officer.

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[] According to a subsequent government announcement, seven persons charged in the plot were executed and 56 others acquitted and discharged, including a brother of former chief of state Gowon. Another of Gowon's brothers reportedly received a jail term.

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[] In his statement, Obasanjo seemed to be appealing to Nigerians to consider the matter ended and to move on to other things. The limited number of new executions--and the fact that they were not carried out in the circus atmosphere that attended the first round of executions last month--seems something of a victory for those in the ruling Supreme Military Council who have been seeking to calm the situation.

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[] Obasanjo also announced that Gowon has been dismissed from the Nigerian army because of his refusal to return to Nigeria from the UK to stand trial on charges that he master-minded the February coup attempt. Until recently, Lagos was paying Gowon's salary during his exile and providing him with a number of perquisites as a former head of state.

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[] Obasanjo announced that London is not cooperating in efforts to extradite Gowon. While Obasanjo said his government considered this an "unfriendly act," he gave no indication whether Lagos intends to press the matter or to retaliate against the UK's considerable economic interests in Nigeria.

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SUDAN-ETHIOPIA

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[REDACTED] Sudan is concerned that Ethiopia's planned offensive against Eritrean rebels could lead to fighting between the two countries.

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[REDACTED] Sudan anticipates that large numbers of Eritreans--including both civilian refugees and armed rebels--will flee across the border and that Ethiopian air and ground forces will enter Sudanese territory in hot pursuit. Last February, Ethiopian aircraft violated Sudanese airspace to attack Eritrean convoys transporting arms and other supplies to the guerrillas.

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[REDACTED] Sudan would have difficulty preventing border violations or expelling large numbers of Ethiopian troops.

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[REDACTED] Relations between Sudan and Ethiopia have worsened in recent months. Addis Ababa is angry at Khartoum's apparent unwillingness to restrict the activity of Eritreans in Sudan. During the past year, the Eritrean rebels have increased their use of Sudanese airports and Red Sea port facilities to funnel arms from supporters in the Arab world.

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[] The Sudanese in turn are unhappy about the unwillingness of Ethiopia's ruling military council to seek a political accommodation with the Eritreans. President Numayri tried for over a year to mediate the conflict, but he has apparently now given up. []

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EAST GERMANY

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[] Continuity, security, and heightened ideological vigilance toward the West will be themes at the ninth East German party congress, which opens today in East Berlin.

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[] Major surprises are unlikely; party chief Honecker will further refine policies that he initiated at the eighth party congress in 1971. Unswerving loyalty to the Soviet Union and insistence on the separate identities of the two German states will be stressed.

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[] The congress will adopt a new party program that bears Honecker's firm imprint. The program serves as a clear reminder to the East German people that the Socialist Unity Party will continue and even enlarge its predominant role in the social and economic fabric of society.

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[] Fidelity to Moscow, as enshrined in the Soviet - East German friendship and mutual aid treaty signed last October, will be given a prominent place at the congress. East German spokesmen will undoubtedly reaffirm their position that support for the USSR's leading role in "proletarian internationalism"

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is the deciding criterion of a communist party's revolutionary credentials. These same points are likely to be underlined by senior ideologist Suslov, who is representing the Soviet party at the East German congress.

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[] Few, if any, significant personnel changes at the national level are expected, although the size of the Politburo could be expanded. []

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ISRAEL

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[] More disturbances occurred yesterday on the West Bank following the killing of a teenage Arab girl by Israeli soldiers in Nabulus on Sunday. Israeli troops used baton charges and a water cannon to break up large demonstrations in Nabulus and imposed a curfew on Jenin and Balata where rioting was reported.

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[] Israeli soldiers killed a bystander yesterday while trying to disperse a group of rock-throwing demonstrators on the Ram Allah - Jerusalem road. The latest deaths bring the total to nine since anti-Israeli demonstrations began four months ago.

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[] The mayor of Nabulus has called for a general strike in protest against the shooting of the girl on Sunday and has appealed to the UN for a commission of inquiry to visit the region. Israeli authorities have ordered an investigation into her death. []

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SYRIA-USSR

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[] A high-level Soviet official recently visited Damascus to discuss acquiring port facilities for the Soviet fleet in the Mediterranean.

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[] The US embassy in Damascus believes that the Syrians will not allow the Soviets to establish a naval base. Damascus might permit the Soviets to use facilities at Latakia for storing spare parts and naval munitions, particularly if the Soviets offer to stretch out payment terms on past Soviet-Syrian arms deals. []

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